

**U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Science Advisory Board (SAB)
Research Strategies Advisory Committee (RSAC)**

**Summary Minutes of Public Teleconference
Wednesday, February 16, 2000**

Committee: Research Strategies Advisory Committee (RSAC) of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Science Advisory Board (SAB). (See Roster - Attachment A.)

Date and Time: Wednesday, February 16, 2000 12:00 noon to 1:30 p.m. (See Federal register Notice - Attachment B.)

Location: The meeting was a public Teleconference. Several participants convened in the Science Advisory Board Conference Room, 6013 Ariel Rios Building, US EPA, 1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC

Purpose: To plan the second stage of the peer review of the Agency's peer review process.(See Meeting Agenda - Attachment C.)

Attendees:

RSAC members - (All current RSAC members except Drs. Hopke, Maki, Matanoski and Murarka were present - See Attachment A.)

Dr. Seeker, Chair

Dr. Adams

Dr. Brown

Dr. Bull

Dr. Colborn

Dr. Middleton

Dr. Morandi

Dr. Smith

EPA Staff

Dr. Jack Fowle (Designated Federal Officer - SAB Staff)

Ms. Wanda Fields (SAB Staff)

Dr. Kerry Dearfield (ORD)

Mr. Jeffrey Morris (ORD)

(See Meeting Sign-In Sheets for other attendees - Attachment D.)

Meeting Summary:

Dr. Randy Seeker, RSAC Chair opened the meeting at 12:05 p.m. welcoming the members

and noting the focus of this call which is to plan phase two of the evaluation of EPA's peer review program, the effectiveness review. Some time will be set aside on the second day of next week's meeting to further discuss this topic.

Dr. Seeker noted that RSAC's first peer review report has made a difference and that EPA's Science Policy Council would be discussing it next week and that they would likely make certain changes to the Peer Review Handbook based on the recommendations. Dr. Kerry Dearfield, of EPA's Science Policy Council Staff, confirmed that the Science Policy Council had reconstituted the Peer Review Advisory Group (PRAG) to change the Handbook based on the SAB and other recommendations received. Dr. Seeker called the RSAC's attention to Dr. Noonan's January 18, 2000 memo about the upcoming Agency-wide assessment of peer review implementation. Mr. Jeffrey Morris stated that this is a true audit of peer review in the program offices and regions it is not just a bookkeeping exercise. They will identify the products produced and make a call about which should have been peer reviewed. For those that were peer reviewed they will assess whether the right mechanism was used. They will not look at whether the peer review comments were included in the final product. The value that RSAC can add in phase 2 of the SAB review is to see if the peer review comments were considered in the final products.

Action 1: Dr. Fowle should contact Nancy Wentworth to determine when the Agency's audit will be finished.

Dr. Seeker then charged the RSAC members to develop a plan for how to conduct phase 2 of the Peer Review of Peer Review at EPA. He asked the members to consider the white paper developed by the SAB staff as a way to launch the discussion. Dr. Brown noted that consideration of whether the Agency is picking the appropriate products for peer review and are these products going to the right place for review is missing from the white paper.

Action 2: Dr. Fowle was instructed to add this consideration to the white paper.

Dr. Seeker asked the committee if they had a preference about whether to conduct a baseline study or whether a pilot study with one office should be conducted first before putting together the complete picture. The committee thought that it might be appropriate to consider doing a pilot study first with small offices with few products and whom the SAB has a good working relationship (e.g. the Office of Radiation and Indoor Air, ORIA), but raised concerns over the length of time that would be required to complete Phase 2 and the likelihood that the reviews would be inconsistent if the other SAB committees were engaged. Thus, at the end of the call RSAC was exploring ways in which I might do a baseline study itself.

There was some discussion by the committee about where the focus of the review should be across the Agency, and there was agreement that the focus should be on the science products and not the policy products. RSAC then considered what priorities to use in selecting which products to review

and to apply in the actual review of the products.

Products from the following types of work were identified as needing to be included in the Phase 2 review:

1. High and low importance work products
2. Engage a range of offices
3. Complex and simple products
4. Interoffice and single office activities
5. Long- and short-time to reach decision
6. Products involving applied and core science
7. Products which received letter, contractor and FACA peer review

Dr. Seeker summarized the committee's discussion of the next steps needed to conduct phase 2 as:

1. Design the review charge and technical approach
2. Pick case studies
3. Lay out the review criteria
4. Identify questions for the Program Offices and Regions to answer about the products selected for review
5. Analyze the responses
6. Write the report

Action 3: For next week's RSAC meeting Dr. Fowle was asked to provide RSAC with draft criteria, a list of the range of variables for products to be reviewed, a matrix for each variable, the 1999 inventory of products peer reviewed at EPA, a short draft memo identifying what RSAC needs to do, and contact the Science Policy Council to let them know of this SAB review and to get their input, especially with regard to how to structure the charge question to get how helpful is the peer review to improve the effectiveness of the Science advice supporting EPA decisions.

Dr. Seeker adjourned the meeting at 1:30 p.m.

I certify that these minutes are accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Dr. John R. Fowle III
Designated Federal Official
Science Advisory Board

Dr. W. Randall Seeker, Chair
Research Strategies Advisory
Committee

Attachments:

A - RSAC Roster

B - Federal Register Notice

C - Meeting Sign-in Sheets

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